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Paul's Epistle to the Romans - Part 3: How Salvation is Achieved

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[This article is based on Romans 5 and 6. To receive maximum benefit from the article, read the chapters first.—EDITORS.]

WITH the end of Romans 4 Paul completes his attempt to convince the Jew (or Jewish Christian) that we are justified by faith and not by works. With chapter 5 he begins a new section. In view of what has gone before, he can now declare, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 1, R.S.V.).

In verse 10 Paul makes the tremendous statement, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (R.S.V.). Here the two themes of reconciliation by Christ's death, and salvation by His life, represent what is more commonly referred to as justification and sanctification. The relationship between these two is close. Unfortunately Christians have been tempted to think of justification as God's gift of forgiveness for sins in the past and of sanctification as something quite apart from it—one's own responsibility to stop sinning and to live a perfect life. But for Paul, justification and sanctification are two sides of the same coin. They both are the work of God. Sanctification comes to the Christian through union with Christ. His life becomes ours (Gal. 2:20). His perfect obedience, His complete consecration, His sinless life, become ours and thus we are sanctified. Ellen G. White has made this very clear in the following words:

"And while we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. Through the sacrifice made in our behalf, sins may be perfectly forgiven. Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33.

Sanctification is indeed "the work . . . of a lifetime" (*The Acts of the*



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HARRY ANDERSON, ARTIST

The Christian who follows Christ's example in being baptized participates with Him in His death and resurrection.

How Salvation Is Achieved

By Earle Hilgert

Apostles, p. 560), both in the sense that it depends upon a lifetime maintenance of union with Christ and in the sense that every Christian, in thankfulness for his salvation, will seek ever to grow more fully into the likeness of Christ. But we must never forget that the basic work of sanctification, as well as of justification, is the work of God in Jesus Christ.

Christ and Adam

Having set forth this union with Christ in the thought that we are saved by His life, Paul is now prepared to discuss the *how* of salvation. As we noticed last week, this question is never answered by the Bible in literal language. Though many theories of the atonement have been propounded throughout the history of Christian thought, we must ever remember that these are mere theories, and at best, are figures of speech.

The basic figures of speech that describe the mystery of the atonement are those provided by the Bible. In verses 12-21 Paul gives us one of the richest insights we have into the inner workings of the plan of salvation. Ever since the early centuries of Christian history these verses have been a theological battleground. Out of them has been developed the doctrine of original sin. This doctrine is particularly connected with the name of Augustine of Hippo, the famous fifth-century theologian and Church Father.

Augustine understood this passage to mean that when Adam sinned all his posterity sinned in him. Accordingly, every child born into this world is tainted with original sin and is unworthy of salvation even though he dies a few moments after birth without ever having exercised for himself the power of choice. This doctrine, though not entirely original with Augustine, was greatly strengthened by his teaching and influence and did much to encourage and spread the practice of infant baptism.

It is our view that any attempt to derive a doctrine of original sin from the passage in question quite misses Paul's point. He is not arguing the question of the nature of man. He is concerned rather to describe figuratively how men are saved. This he does with great effectiveness by means of a comparison between Adam and Christ. For this he draws on a theme widespread in the religious world of his time, that of the "first man" and the "second man" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). This widely held idea was that the first or proto-man would be paralleled by or recapitulated in the "second man," the coming Saviour or Messiah.

While this view was a common one

Tithepayer's Fruit Crop Spared

By W. E. Phillips, Assistant Treasurer, General Conference

In West Australia, Brother J. Conway is a commercial fruit grower in the Carmel Valley near Perth. He is a loyal member of the church and a faithful tithepayer, for which he has received some remarkable blessings. One of the real hazards to fruit growers in his area is a sudden hailstorm, often so severe that an entire crop is ruined. On numerous occasions through the years the Lord has protected his crop from damage when his neighbors on both sides sustained extensive losses.

One Friday evening in 1961 when a hailstorm came in all its fury, the deafening roar could be heard on the iron roof of his cottage in the midst of the orchard. It was the greatest storm in his memory, and he pleaded with God to protect his crop of Elberta peaches. Brother Conway expressed his confidence that God would provide for the needs of the family; therefore, they were going to continue to enjoy their Sabbath day without fears.

Although he saw some fruit on the ground in the morning, he refrained from inspecting his trees on the Sabbath. On Sunday morning neighbors came to the orchard with containers to buy damaged peaches for preserving, having heard that crops throughout the area were completely ruined. Brother Conway took them into his orchard, and showed them a few peaches on the ground, but the fruit on the trees was quite undamaged. It later proved to be the largest crop he has harvested.

in Paul's day, evidence is clear that it caused the Jews theological difficulties. How could the first man, Adam, who had sinned, be paralleled with the coming Messiah, the Saviour? Certain areas of Judaism (as for instance the writers of the Apocalyptic book known as I Enoch) evidently sought to solve this problem by shifting the onus for the introduction of sin away from Adam and portraying evil angels at the time of the Flood as being the ones who introduced sin into this world. A similar approach is found in early Jewish-Christian literature (in the Pseudo-Clementine *Preaching of Peter*) where Jesus is identified as a reincarnation of Adam. The latter is declared not to have fallen but to have been maligned by the devil's inserting a false story of the Fall into the Scriptures.

Paul's approach to this problem is fresh and daring. He makes no attempt to dodge the fact that Adam sinned. Rather he recognizes that sin did indeed come into the world through him. At the same time he maintains an analogy between Adam and Christ which the fact of Adam's sin does not annul. This analogy is the real point of verses 12-21 and constitutes a powerful figure of speech by which Paul explains the atonement.

His analogy is this: Christ and Adam are paralleled by the fact that each one has a unique relationship with the rest of mankind. This relationship is that of "the one to the many and the many to the one." In a sense, we may say that this is a mystical relationship—a relationship in which many men are united with another one man. Paul recognizes that all men have sinned (verse 12), that sin has resulted in the death of all men, and he therefore points back to Adam through whom death en-

tered as the fountainhead of man's sin and death.

This relationship of the many to the one he then compares with the believer's relationship to Christ. It is this latter side of the analogy on which Paul focuses his attention and which constitutes the point of his argument: the believer may enjoy a dynamic, saving, spiritual union with Christ. This relationship of the many to the one means that "one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (verse 18, R.S.V.).

In seeking to understand Paul's argument we must remember that his analogy between Christ and Adam turns on only one point, the theme of the relationship between "the one and the many." We are immediately in difficulty if we seek to establish further lines of parallel between Adam and Christ. In fact, Paul points up distinct differences between them: "And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification" (verse 16, R.S.V.). The relationship between man and Adam has a negative effect, that between man and Christ a positive one. The relationship between man and Adam lies outside of faith, that between the believer and Christ is one of faith.

In none of these areas should we seek to establish analogies. We should be content simply to leave the argument where Paul puts it, squarely on the basis of the fact that in each case the relation consists of a union between the one and the many.

From this we can see how unjustified it is to try to read into Paul's words about the relationship between man and Adam any kind of doctrine of "original sin." Paul is not con-

cerned with the inner mechanics of damnation and he makes no attempt to explain the *how* of our common predicament. Rather he takes a familiar theological frame of reference of his own time and uses it fruitfully and with originality to set forth the fact that while Christ is the second Adam, the last Man, He has triumphed where Adam failed.

If such ways of arguing seem long ago and far away from our modern world and its logic, we must remember that Paul is not speaking in entirely literal terms. As everywhere else throughout Scripture when the atonement is discussed, he is employing figures of speech and moving from thought to thought—not so much in terms of a chain of syllogistic logic as by subtle association of interrelated ideas. His basic point, however, is clear: Christ is God's perfect Man and He more than succeeded where Adam failed.

The Meaning of Baptism

At the beginning of chapter 6 Paul turns to baptism, an experience all members of the church in Rome had known. He uses their experience as a means of bringing home to them a realization of the importance of their union with Christ, the union between "the one and the many," which he has just been discussing. He declares, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (verses 4, 5, R.S.V.). Paul here is saying that in baptism the believer has experienced this union with Christ—union in His death, His burial, and His resurrection.

This is perhaps the most important passage we have in the New Testament regarding the meaning of baptism. Baptism is a confession by the one who receives it that he believes Jesus Christ to be his Lord and Saviour; but it is much more than this. It is the sign and signal and seal of our union with Christ in those crucial saving events that took place on Golgotha and at Joseph's tomb. As Karl Barth has pointed out in his book on baptism (*The Teaching of the Church Concerning Baptism* [Toronto, 1948], p. 11), when the believer is baptized it means that he participates with Christ in His death and resurrection. Rising with Christ, he, the believer, no longer lives, but Christ. This is the beginning of eternal life.

Ellen G. White has said: "Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with

Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

In this view of baptism there is no thought of any kind of magical efficacy by which God is induced to work a miracle simply because man performs a certain rite. But it does mean that there is something divinely positive and dynamic in baptism. It is attended by a special blessing. It is meaningful not simply for what the believer does and proclaims by it, but also for what God does.

The dynamic of baptism may be illustrated partially by comparing it with an oath of citizenship. Let us say that two men come to a new land from abroad. One man comes as a youth, he learns a new language, marries a local girl, raises his family, and to all intents and purposes appears to belong to his adopted country; yet he never goes before a judge

to hold up his hand and say the few simple words by which he pledges allegiance and becomes a citizen.

The other man comes with a wife and family, he continues to use his mother tongue at home and with his neighbors, and in many respects outwardly remains a native of his homeland; yet one day he goes before a judge and after a short ceremony *does* become a citizen. No matter what we may say about outward appearances, we must agree that inwardly something has happened to the second man that did not happen to the first. The effect of the oath upon the latter man's heart and mind mark him off as a citizen in a way that can never be true of the first man.

This example is at least suggestive of the importance of the rite of baptism. This importance is compounded when we recognize that the dynamic of baptism is not only psychological, but is the work of the Spirit of God. As the oath of citizenship is the beginning of a new dimension of political life, so in an infinitely greater degree baptism is the beginning of eternal life.

"Too Much to Your Church"



* * *

Apprehensively, I watched the banker shuffle the papers on his desk. I had requested a loan for new equipment in my business, which was probably larger than the frugal New England banker would deem wise. Finally he raised his eyes: "We find only one thing wrong with your financial statements. You give too much to your church."

"Sorry, sir," I answered. "I would consider any other change you might suggest, but that I cannot, because I don't believe the rest of my statement would be acceptable were it not for the blessing I receive by trying to be faithful with my God."

"I knew you would say that," he answered, "but possibly you could do even more for your church at a later date if you would keep more in the business now."

My mind flashed back to the time several years before when, behind in tithe, behind in taxes, and with creditors pushing on all sides, I had made my decision to be faithful to God, for I had reasoned:

My employees get a check each week; my wife gets her check; only God is left out. I had justified this procedure by arguing that I never knew exactly how much I would make until the year was over. But then taxes seemed to take it all.

I reasoned further: You know how much you think you will make, so why not make out your check accordingly for the church each week? I vowed to do so. It had been a struggle. Some weeks I would not turn the check in until later, fearing an overdraft. It was a difficult year, the poorest I had experienced in more than 15 years in business. With the beginning of the new year I was tempted to cut back God's check for my tithe and offerings, or eliminate it altogether. I had overpaid my tithe alone by three times!

Then I thought of the years I had failed God, and decided to continue. By March it was obvious that I must increase this amount by a substantial per cent, a process that has continued ever since. Proving God had paid dividends, with blessings I would not have dreamed possible a few short years before!

Reality returned. The banker was smiling as he continued: "However, you may have the money whenever you wish."

I'm glad he knew I wouldn't change. Without God's blessing, my life would be barren indeed.